

all except this simple one—that however dull and prosaic a country, a race, or an individual may at first sight seem, we can never be sure that they will not suddenly blossom into poetry. For it is a wild flower, that sows itself in the most unlooked-for places; like an ash-tree springing up on a chimney-stack, or a swallow nesting in the cab of a railway-engine. Picture, for instance, a human being with not much imagination, not much ear for verbal music, not much passion for the beauty of nature—fonder, by his own admission, of watching faces in the street; in. temper a scientist rather than an artist, and indifferent to painting, music, or architecture; preferring 'in botany grasses, the most useful but least ornamental; in minerals, the earths and sands; in entomology the minuter insects; and given at one time to roaming the sea-shore (Parnassian occupation!) in search of drowned dogs to dissect. See him, to complete the picture, as by profession an unsuccessful surgeon, then a clergyman of the Church of England, noted for his strong sermons against 'enthusiasm'. How many of us would subscribe very hopefully to a forthcoming edition of such a person's poems? Do you ask more details—his origin? He was the child of a tax-collector with mathematical leanings, and of a publican's widow. The surroundings of his childhood? A drab and straggling street, bounded by a monotony of grey shingle and grey sea on one side, on

the other by a
barren heath and a mud-bound marsh, with
dark brown
water oozing slowly down its dykes. The
society he mixed
with—by necessity, if not by choice? The
provincials of a
petty port; London tradespeople; the stiff
correctness of an
eighteenth-century ducal castle; or else such
country types
as these described by his son: 'One was a
jolly old farmer,
with much of the person and humour of
Palstaff, a face
as rosy as brandy could make it, and an eye
teeming with